

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

The Loudoun County School Board expects all staff, as public employees, to recognize that they are in a position of public trust and are held to the highest standard of personal and professional conduct, serving as role models, influencing and shaping young lives, and representing the school division. It is the policy of the School Board to promote and foster work and educational environments that demonstrate the principles of respect, professionalism, civility, and inclusivity.

As stewards of the school division, employees are expected to convey these principles to students, parents, colleagues, and the school community through their actions and day-to-day activities during and after school or work hours, whether on or off school board property, including the property of any school, office, or facility. As public employees, it is important that employees are mindful of the potential impact of their behaviors and actions that occur outside of their job responsibilities and work hours.

A. Expectation of Professionalism. Employees are expected to perform all assigned job duties in accordance with performance standards and job-specific requirements (to include attendance-related policies, procedures, and guidelines). Employees are expected to conduct themselves professionally, to treat all individuals with dignity, respect, and civility, and to demonstrate a commitment to an inclusive, safe and supportive work and educational environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds work together to pursue the shared mission of the school division. Unacceptable behavior includes but is not limited to:

1. Bullying behavior against staff or students as defined in School Board Policy 7014 (Environments Free From Harassment, Discrimination, and Abuse) and School Board Policy 8250 (Bullying Prevention and Education);
2. Acts of physical violence or threats of violence or harm towards others;
3. Theft of any kind;
4. Shouting, yelling, or raising one's voice in a hostile, angry, or threatening manner;
5. Intentionally damaging school board or privately-owned property, or acts of negligence that result in damage to property;
6. Disrespectful, discourteous, uncivil, disparaging, or demeaning words, gestures or actions;
7. Using, selling, dispensing, possessing, manufacturing, or being under the influence of illegal drugs and narcotics or alcohol as defined in School Board Policy 7550 (Drug- and Alcohol-Free Workplace); or
8. Failure to adhere to School Board policies and regulations, state and federal laws and regulations, and school- or department-based procedures and guidelines.

B. Commitment to Equitable Treatment. The Loudoun County School Board is committed to an equitable and inclusive work and educational environment for employees and students. As outlined in the Superintendent's Statement on Equity, Loudoun County Public Schools reject racist and other racially motivated behavior and language, recognizing

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

that it encourages discrimination, hatred, oppression, and violence. Employees are expected to support the school division's commitment to action-oriented equity practices through the performance of their job duties, as the Division engages in the disruption and dismantling of white supremacy, systemic racism, and language and actions motivated by race, religion, country of origin, gender identity, sexual orientation, and/or ability. Behavior that will not be tolerated includes but is not limited to:

1. Harassing or discriminatory comments or conduct including speech or other telephone, electronic, or social media communication that:
 - a. is motivated in whole or in part by a bias against an individual's race, national origin, ancestry, color, sex, sexual orientation, perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, pregnancy, childbirth or related medical conditions, marital status, age, religion, disability, genetic information, or veteran status; or
 - b. can reasonably be interpreted as discriminatory, racially or ethnically derogatory, defamatory, or as undermining the views, positions, goals, policies or public statements of the Loudoun County School Board or its Superintendent when such comments or conduct create the reasonable apprehension of a disruption or disrupt the operations or efficiency of LCPS.
2. Use of racial insults or slurs regardless of intent. For example, it is unacceptable to use a racial insult or slur in responding to or addressing a situation in which an individual has used a racial insult or slur.
3. Any comments or actions that are not in alignment with the school division's commitment to action-oriented equity practices, and which impact an individual's ability to perform their job responsibilities or create a breach in the trust bestowed upon them as an employee of the school division. This includes on-campus and off-campus speech, social media posts, and any other telephonic or electronic communication.

C. Recognition of Appropriate Employee-Student Boundaries. Employees are expected to establish and maintain appropriate physical, social and emotional boundaries with students. Unacceptable behavior includes but is not limited to:

1. Grooming, Sexual Misconduct, and Sexual Abuse. Grooming is a method used by adults that involves building trust and/or attempting to build trust with children and/or adults for the purpose of developing an inappropriate relationship. Grooming, sexual misconduct, and sexual abuse are egregious breaches of an educator's professionalism and duty to protect children and are strictly prohibited.
 - a. Per School Board Policy 7530 (Duty to Report Child Abuse and Neglect), allegations of behaviors that constitute grooming, sexual misconduct, or other forms of abuse or neglect must be reported to

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

Child Protective Services (or Adult Protective Services, as applicable) and appropriate law enforcement agencies.

b. Behavior that violates this policy includes but is not limited to the following:

- (i) Sexual or romantic invitations to students;
- (ii) Dating students or soliciting dates with students;
- (iii) Engaging in sexualized dialogue with students;
- (iv) Making suggestive comments to students or in the known presence of students;
- (v) Physical exposure of a sexual, romantic, or erotic nature;
- (vi) Self-disclosure of a sexual or erotic nature to students or in the known presence of students; or
- (vii) Sexual contact or inappropriate overtures to students whether they be physical, verbal, non-verbal, written or electronic.

c. Engaging in an intimate, romantic, or sexual relationship with a student after the student's graduation, combined with credible allegations of engaging in grooming behaviors with the student before graduation, will result in an investigation. Substantiation that such grooming behaviors occurred before the student's graduation will lead to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

2. Inappropriate or Intimate Social Relationships and Communication. The boundary of the employee-student relationship must be maintained at all times. Examples of behaviors that constitute an inappropriate or intimate social relationship or communication with a student include but are not limited to:

- a. Conversations and comments of an intimate, romantic, or sexual nature;
- b. Commentary on a student's physical appearance or clothing that could reasonably be interpreted as sexual, flirtatious, or harassing;
- c. Physical contact with students that could reasonably be interpreted as sexual harassment or as having sexual or flirtatious intentions;
- d. Telephonic or electronic communication, including social media contact, unrelated to school activities to include but not limited to connecting with, following, or friending students via social media or email accounts;
- e. Prolonged, frequent, or private contact between an employee and student during or outside school hours that is unrelated to academics or school activities;
- f. Singling out students for flirtation, friendship, or personal attention beyond the bounds of the employee-student relationship;
- g. Singling out students for receipt of gifts;

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

- h. Transporting students in personal vehicles without the knowledge of a parent/guardian or a supervisor, outside of case-by-case approval by a supervisor for an exception to transport the student in the event of an emergency or unusual circumstance; or
- i. Entering the home of a student without the knowledge of and presence of a parent/guardian.

All forms of contact and communication with students must be transparent, accessible to supervisors and parents, nonsexual, unambiguous in meaning, and professional in reference and content. If an employee feels that a student is contacting or engaging with them inappropriately or that the student is attempting to blur the line of their relationship, the employee will seek immediate guidance from their supervisor.

D. Duty To Report. Employees with supervisory responsibilities are expected to encourage professional, respectful, civil, equitable, and inclusive work and educational environments for employees and students, and to address issues of unprofessionalism. Employees who feel they have been subjected to conduct that may violate the expectations outlined within this policy, or who have witnessed such conduct, should notify their supervisor immediately. Students who feel they have been subjected to conduct that may violate the expectations outlined in this policy, or who feel they have witnessed such conduct, should notify a building administrator, school counselor, or the Department of Instruction's School Administration Office.

1. If the concern is about the employee's supervisor, the employee will report the complaint to the supervisor's supervisor, department head, or the Department of Human Resources and Talent Development.

2. Employees must also ensure they are following reporting requirements outlined in other relevant School Board policies to include but not limited to School Board Policy 7530 (Duty to Report Child or Student Abuse and Neglect) and School Board Policy 7550 (Drug- and Alcohol-Free Workplace). Any employee who becomes aware of sexual harassment by any means is obligated to immediately report it to their supervisor who will, in turn, report the matter to the Title IX Coordinator. Failure to follow reporting requirements is considered a violation of this policy.

3. Employees are also encouraged to report violations of LCPS's commitment to equitable treatment of students and staff to their immediate supervisor or principal.

E. Protected Speech. Nothing in this policy or any other policy shall be interpreted as abridging an employee's First Amendment right to engage in protected speech, however, based upon an individualized inquiry, speech, including but not limited to via social media, on matters of public concern may be outweighed by the school division's interest in the following:

- 1. Maintaining efficiency of the school system;

PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

2. Preventing disruption or a reasonable apprehension of a disruption of the learning and working environment;
3. Maintaining public trust and confidence at all times;
4. Fostering close personal relationships among and between staff and parents;
5. Promoting internal LCPS and external community harmony and peace; and
6. Establishing and maintaining a tranquil learning and working environment.
7. Achieving consistent application of the Board's and Superintendent's stated mission, goals, policies and directives, including protected class equity, racial equity, and the goal to root out systemic racism.

F. Provision Against Retaliation. Employees are prohibited from retaliating against an individual for raising concerns of potential violations of this policy. Individuals who knowingly make false complaints under this policy are subject to disciplinary action. Reasonable, good faith beliefs that this policy has been violated will not result in discipline if the concerns raised are later proven untrue.

Adopted: 10/10/72
Revised: 6/22/93, 4/26/16
Current Revision: xx/xx/xx

Legal Refs: § 22.1-291.4, § 1-276.01

Cross Refs: Policy 7014, Environments Free From Harassment, Discrimination and Abuse, Policy 7016, Employment Complaints, Policy 7312, Evaluation of Licensed, Classified, and Administrative Staff, Policy 7530, Duty to Report Child Abuse and Neglect, Policy 7550 Drug- and Alcohol-Free Workplace, Policy 8250, Bullying Prevention and Education, Duty to Report Sexual Harassment as provided by Title IX Regulations, 34 C.F.R. Part 106.